

Chaucer on Modernity

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PART II

continued

Wyclif accused the corrupt churchmen, both regular and secular alike, of having neglected their spiritual duties from accumulation of temporal possessions. The Church prohibition had been laid on the alienation of her property. He regrets that her so much temporal possessions caused estrangement of churchmen from God. The worldly churchmen are, so he says, best advised to live in poverty as is ordered by the Gospel: "...thai (priests) schulde be the more withdrawe fro seculer lordeschip — than prestis of the olde lawe.... sith the olde lawe byhotith for the keypyng therof prosperite of this lyfe, and the gospelle bihotith the kyngdome of heuen. And so no man may putte an other grounde bisyde that that is putte the whiche is criste ihesu." "God," he argues, "is the lord of everything in the world, and all the righteous hold it in common." However he was conservative in the application of his theory of "Dominion" to social matters. In the "Clergy May Not Hold Property" he advances, in favour of temporal lords, the doctrine that the Church should be disendowed with worldly possessions, so that the temporal lords may secure the poor: "For sith thai han now the more part of the temporal lordeschips, and with that the spiritualtees and the greete mouable tresouris of the rewme, thai may lightly make a conquest up-on that othir party; namely, sith the temporal lordis ben not in noumbre and in ryches lyke as thai wer sum tyme; for thai ben sotilly spolid of her lordeschipsis, in distroyng of her staate and power that god sett hem in, and the party of the clergy in alle thes poyntis ben encresyd, and so couetously thai ben sette up-on thes goodis that thai welden now, & mo that thai hopen to haue, that thai will not suffre her couetise to be enpugnyd openly ne priuely, als ferr as thai may lett it." It is likely that he at this period thought abuses in the Church could be reformed on the lines of the orthodox faith. His strong argument against the endowments and privilege of the Church in favour of temporal lords was endorsed by John of Gaunt, who was impatient for the confiscation of Church property and the administrative superiority of temporal lords over episcopal lords. Having given a denial to the doctrine of Transubstantiation, however, Wyclif alienated Gaunt. The Duke ceased to support him; he was alarmed by Wyclif's open advocacy of the heretical view of the Real Presence. Early in 1379, perhaps, Wyclif, though recognized implicitly that accidents were not present without sensible substance, refused to accept the view that the substance of the bread was in sacramental manner converted into the Host, leaving behind its appearances or its accidents. Pope Gregory XI's attacks on Wyclif's view of "Dominion" and the papal Schism led him to argue against the Sacrament. His unorthodox theory of the Sacrament which was put

on the evidence of the senses grew into the depreciation of the importance of ceremonies and rituals, of worship of images and cult of relics. These are rejected as intervenient in the direct relation of each individual to God. Instead of putting a trust in the Church Sacraments and the saint-worship, he was rather sure of a direct contact of man with God. As Wyclif was a devoted man he did not think that the adoration of the Virgin, the cult of saints and the worship of images should altogether be removed. He never denounced such worship as wrong in so far as it increased veritable devotion to God. The Virgin was not most cordially recommended by him as an object of people's prayer. There must have been the Mariolatrous spirit of his contemporaries at work. By the time of Wyclif the idolatrous worship of the Virgin had encountered criticism from faithless folk. Gautier de Coincy, for instance, mentions in his *Miracles de la Sainte Vierge*: "Qui honneur certes ne li porte, Et ses miracles bien ne croit, Il ne croit mie que Diex soit, Ne que Diex ait point de puissance." On the other hand, the Virgin was looked up to by him as a paragon of womanhood. The example of virtue set by Her is, he argues, to be emulated, especially by women. The same is also the case with women saints. Wyclif advises court ladies to follow the examples of Cecilia, Katherine and Juliana, though he did not put faith in the lives of saints. It is because "now cometh ensaumples of pride, glotonye, lecherie & hal harlotrie fro lordis courtis to the comyns." He did not value the superstitious worship of images and relics attached to saint-cult except that he grew angry with Knox who had thrown the image of the Virgin into the waters. His views on the direct contact of man with God is the criticism given on the pretensions of the Church services and the worship of images and relics. He encourages people to look to the worth of a man, not to that of a corrupt Church. He states: "& thus cristenmen shulden not lette for the drede of the fend & for power of his clerkis to sue & holde cristis lawe. but wel y woot that this chirche hath be many day in growing, & summe clepen it not cristis chirche, but the chirche of wickid spiritis. & dauyth hatide this chirche as ech cristenman shulde do. & man may no bettere knowe anticristis clerk than bi this. that he loueth this chirche & hatith the chirche of criste; & if the pope be an heed to mayntene this chirche agenus christ, he is opvn anticrist & no part of cristis chirche." This idea was founded on the belief that men should hold the law of God in place of the teaching of anticristian priests. The sins of the Church led him to the acceptance of the Bible as a spiritual authority. Little is known about his share in the English translation of the Bible, although it has been thought that he translated all the Bible into English. He urges upon the clergy of lower ranks and laymen of some education the necessity of reading the Bible in their native language: "It semyth first that the wit of Goddis lawe shulde be taught in that tunge that is more knowun, for this wit is Goddis word. Whanne Crist seith in the Gospel that both heuene and erthe shulen passe, but His wordis shulen not passe, He vndirstondith bi His woordis His wit. And thus Goddis wit is Hooly Writ, that may on no maner by fals." Thanks to his undertaking people could have access to the words of Christ in their own language. An English translation of both Testaments were done by Nicholas Hereford, Wyclif's Oxford colleagues, and unknown translators. About 1396 the second English version of the whole Bible was believed to be completed by John Purvey, Hereford's disciple with the assistance of his Oxford scholars. His attacks on corruption in the Church due to the accumulation of wealth by her were welcomed by agitators like John Ball and Wat Tyler, who

opposed to all authorities, secular and ecclesiastical alike, though Wyclif was conservative in applying his theories to social matters. Of John Ball Froissart says that every Sunday after Mass he was accustomed to preach to people: "A ye good people, the maters gothe nat well to passe in Englande, nor shall nat do tyll every thyng be common; and that there be no villayns nor gentylnen, but that we may be all unyed toguyder, and that the lordes be no greater maisters than we be. What have we deserved, or why shulde we be kept thus in servage? We be all come fro one father and one mother, Adam and Eve." Walsingham concluded that the teachings of Wyclif and his friars were solely responsible for the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. Langland declares that the friars preached the equality of men in the sight of God to the vulgar: "freres to go to scole, And lerne logyk and lawe and eke contemplacioun, And preche men of Plato and preue it by Seneca, That alle thinges vnder heuene oughte to ben in comune." Of course, Wyclif's teaching of Church disendowment was reflected in a charter demanded by Wat Tyler. The fourth and fifth items of the charter were as follows: "4. That the goods of the Church should be divided among the parishioners. 5. That possessioners should be deprived of everything except their sustenance." It admits of no superficial conclusion. The immediate cause of the Rising is to be sought in the poll tax of 1380. The poll tax imposed heavy charge on the peasants who had, many of them, been transformed into free labourers since the first visitation of the Black Death. Owing to labour scarcity many came gradually to be paid daily wages for their labour service. Both the Nobles and the Commons, who had been eager for the English Churchmen's share in the war taxation in order to raise money for the war with France, appealed to a poll tax, while succeeding, with much effort, in allotting a portion of the war taxation to the Clergy. The peasants mob, thus roused and advanced against London raged in all its fury like a wild beast. After Wat Tyler having been killed by Mayor Walworth, the riot was put down. Throughout the eighties and nineties Wyclif continued to find in men of all ranks and sizes of society his steady supporters, who were called Lollards. The Wyclifites were spreading through the whole land. It is said that Queen Anne and Joan of Kent, mother of King Richard, felt sympathy for the Lollard movement. The so-called Lollard Knights, among whom were counted Sir Richard Stury, Sir Lewis Clifford, Thomas Latimer and Lord John Montagu, denounced, among other things, against Transubstantiation, image-worship, Church endowments and the clerical pursuit of secular employment. Sir Richard Stury and his intimate friend, Sir Lewis Clifford were on intimate terms with Chaucer. Chaucer had served with Stury on the diplomatic mission to France; he, again, addresses Sir Philip de la Vache, the son-in-law of Clifford, by his name in *Truth*. These parliamentary knights presented the Lollard Conclusions to parliament in 1395. King Richard suppressed the parliamentary leaders in heresy in favour of bishops, who, seeing that both the Nobles and the Commons refused to accept a proposition to suppress the parliamentary heretics, persuaded the King of suppressing the heretics' proceedings. Sir Richard Stury was compelled to forsake his opinions on pain of death. Many gentry, including country gentlemen, merchants and burgesses, from an anticlerical point of view supported Lollardy. The King passed an ordinance against Wycliffite poor priests; the Commons insisted on annulling it (1395). The poor priests had been preaching against the worldliness of the Church and emphasizing popular reading of an English Bible. The sins of worldly priests, as they correspond to those of Wyclif,

are denounced: worldly priests "haunten lordis courtis and ben occupied in worldly office and don not here cure to here parishenys," and "wolen not goo comunly a myle for to preche the gospel." Wyclif's Oxford Lollards like Philip Repingdon and John Aston had preached against the Church Sacraments administered by a priest in mortal sin. Courtenay, Archbishop of Canterbury, had compelled a recantation of heresy; Repingdon and Aston had submitted to Church authority (1382). Small wonder if Lollardy flourished in a state of the questioning of religious beliefs which had been facilitated by the Great Schism.

III

In the General Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* Chaucer says of sundry folk assembled at the Tabard Inn that he wants to give us an unqualified account of Canterbury pilgrims: "Me thinketh it acordaunt to resoun, To telle yow al the condicioun Of ech of hem, so as it semed me, And whiche they weren, and of what degree." His realism is however a mere pretense in a sense that some pilgrims, judged from his world of actuality observed above, are idealized and seldom encountered in the actual world. To be sure, the portraits of the Knight, his son the Squire, the Clerk of Oxford, the Parson and the Plowman, his brother, are not the honest portraits of real human beings. He did not write, it seems, of these pilgrims as they were. Did he rather describe them reversely? These pilgrims are everything that they should be. Deprived of human conditions they are idealized conceptions. The knight, ardent and sincere as he was in religious wars, is not referred to as being not courteous in their demeanour and wording. In Froissart's *Chronicles*, for instance, there are several cases on record of knights having not reconciled themselves to their knightly fame. In an age when popes waged private wars against their enemies, such brutality as the Black Prince's massacre of the inhabitants of Limoges in 1370 was no uncommon occurrence. Of Creon Chaucer says in the *Knight's Tale*: "That lord is now of Thebes the citee, Fulfild of ire and of iniquitee, He, for despyt, and for his tirannye, To do the dede bodyes vileinye, Of alle our lordes, whiche that ben slawe, Hath alle the bodyes on an heep y-drawe, And wol nat suffren hem, by noon assent, Neither to been y-buried nor y-brent, But maketh houndes ete hem in despyt." Again, Chaucer's descriptions of the Knight contain no reference to the Knight's love and marriage. Whether he, like Arveragus of the *Franklin's Tale*, took his lady to wife, after having served her as a lover, or not is not mentioned. Arveragus "loved and dide his payne To serve a lady in his beste wyse.... For she was oon, the faireste under sonne." And Dorigen, a lady of Arveragus, "for his worthinesse, And namely for his meke obeysaunce, Hath swich a pitee caught of his penaunce, That prively she fil of his accord To take him for hir housbonde and hir lord, Of swich lordshipe as men han over hir wyves." As has been shown in Gaunt's love for Blanche, a marriage for love was characteristic of love in the English court. Chaucer never gives any description of the Squire's active service for money. In the Hundred Years' War men-at-arms, by indenture, hired themselves out as the King's servants, as is implied in a contract between the god of Love and Palamon and Arcite: "Thus hath hir lord, the god of love, y-payd Hir wages and hir fees for hir servyse!" Chaucer's Squire, who ranks below a knight, is considered to be paid 1s a day. Of such daily wages as this are on record in Hewitt's *Organization of*

War under Edward III. An earl was paid at the rate of 6s 8d a day; a knight banneret, 4s; a knight 2s; a man-at-arms 1 s. It is known that a poor parson of London might receive only about £4 a year, although more lucky parson might obtain a revenue of £ 10 or more a year. We are told of the Parson, who is poor, that he is rich in holy thought and deed, looks for no pomp and reverence, and is an ideal shepherd who stays at his parish and guards his fold. As for the Parson, it may be conceivable, in a sense, that Chaucer refers, to some extent, to a corruption of a parish priest. Of course, he gives a direct negative to the Parson's absenteeism from his parish, the guild appointments of him, and the demand for reading of the vernacular Bible, which are thought to have been universal among Chaucer's contemporaries. The Host addresses the Parson as a Lollard, while resuming the Canterbury pilgrims' journey: "I (the Host) smelle a loller in the wind.... How! good men... herkneth me; Abydeth, for goddes digne passioun, For we shal han a predicacioun; This loller heer wil prechen us som-what." If this be the case, there is no denying the Parson's heresy, to which Chaucer makes a reference nowhere. Chaucer's only reference to a denial of the doctrine of Transubstantiation is humorous: in the *Pardoner's Tale* he says: "O wombe! O bely! O stinking cod, Fulfild of donge and of corrupcioun! At either ende of thee foul is the soun. How greet labour and cost is thee to finde! Thise cokes, how they stampe, and streyne, and grinde, And turnen substaunce in-to accident, To fulfille al thy likerous talent!" Special emphasis is given to the Parson's learning and knowledge of Christ's Gospel. His learning is so far from being "but litel on the Bible." Whether he is a Wycliffite or not is uncertain, but he never possesses all the characteristics of corrupt parish priests. Unlike many parsons of the day he is an ideal parish priest, in so far as Chaucer portrays his Parson as everything that a parson should be. The Clerk of Oxford is without a touch of the Oxford students' devotion to worldliness and their unorthodox views on the Faith. Poor as he is, Chaucer says, he is not so worldly as to hire himself out to a parish priest as a curate; he, instead, gives himself up to the philosophy of Aristotle. Devoted to logic, he is not depicted as having no belief in the orthodox faith. The devotion to logic led students to divide reason from faith. Similarly, the passion for astronomy led to disbelief. The Clerk's concern about astronomy is not alluded to in his portrait. It is certain that he was or is being, taught astronomy. We find Nicholas, Oxford student, devoting himself to it in the *Miller's Tale*. Astronomy was included in the Oxford curriculum of the Middle Ages. The stars were thought to exercise a strong influence on men's passions. The reason is that few rule their own passions. To be sure, an orthodox view was in favour of men's control over their bodily appetites. It is difficult for most men to resist the dictates of their lower functions. Nicholas indulges in the pleasures of the flesh. Chaucer makes his Plowman's portrait with the eyes of God, which differs profoundly from pictures of the majority of peasants of the day. Human condition is withdrawn from his portrait. So, the Plowman has nothing in common with "stormy peple," "unsad and ever untrew," and "Ay undiscreet and chaunging as a vane, Delytyng ever in rumbel That is newe." An insidious life and a disbelief in the established faith are lacking in his portrait. Living in peace and perfect charity, he is willing to farm soil for God and for his neighbours, including his lord. He never performs a manual labour service on his lord's demesne-land in return for daily wages. Nor does he demand higher wages. Thus, he never think of raising a riot; he was not involved in the Peasants'

Rising of 1381. He is not troubled about the scale of wages for labour service and about the heresies of Wycliffites and questioning of the established faith.

It is quite otherwise with most other pilgrims. The idealized pilgrims hardly embody human qualities; they, judged according to the medieval ideal of social orders, are depicted as everything that they should be. Chaucer has much respect for this ideal of society. On the contrary, those who do not represent this medieval ideal are, in general, warmly human, and from moral point of view are sinful. The bourgeois concern is to make a profit, to attain to wealth, and to put on superior airs or brag and boast. The regular clergy, with the tastes of lay courtiers, who, neglecting their spiritual duty, indulge in worldliness, are laughed at. Nearly every pilgrim can hardly escape sarcasm or irony, not to mention of the lower classes of pilgrims who trick people out of money. It may be said, therefore, that these flesh and blood pilgrims are presented with a mild satire. Nevertheless, much of detailed descriptions of these pilgrims are in accord with the externals of Chaucer's world. The dignified Merchant, who, though in debt, goes ahead with a business talk, and is anxious about the safety of the trade channel between Middleburg and Orwell, has the characteristics of a merchant prince, although the historical identity of Chaucer's Merchant is not clearly discovered. The five well-to-do Burgesses, composed of a Haberdasher, a Carpenter, a Dyer, a Weaver and an Upholsterer, are said to be all qualified by their properties and income for aldermanship or mayoralty. These guildsmen were all not involved in a conflict concerning London city control between the victualling guilds and non-victualling guilds in the early 1380's. Such guildsmen as Chaucer's Burgesses were not so influential as grocers, mercers and drapers, but were fully qualified to represent their guilds in the City Council. The Franklin, the wealthier country gentleman, has a long handle to his name. He seems to make much of titles. For he regrets that his son do not behave as a squire. Such a franklin was used for justice of the peace, knight of the shire, sheriff or auditor. It is suggested that John Bussy of Lincolnshire was a model of Chaucer's Franklin. And there seem to have been many monks and nuns who care nothing for the duties of the cloisters, and were comparable, as it were, to fishes out of water. Not a few of monks like Chaucer's Monk must have ventured to have an opinion that: "What sholde he studie, and make him-selven wood, Upon a book in cloistre alwey to poure, Or swinken with his handes, and laboure, As Austin bit? How shal the world be served? Lat Austin have his swink to him reserved." Chaucer the pilgrim agrees with the Monk, saying that "his opinioun was good." To be sure, Chaucer doubts of a problem of God's justice, with which many has been perplexed to account for the existence of evil. Questioning of providence and loss of faith, these problems was caused by a failure in a reconciliation of God's justice and the existence of sin created by Him, although the Church sought for a reconciliation between these conflicting ideas. Dorigen of the *Franklin's Tale* carefully considers the theological problem: "I woot wel clerkes wol seyn, as hem leste, By arguments, that al is for the beste, Though I ne can the causes nat y-knowe. But thilke god, that made wind to blowe, As kepe my lord! this my conclusioun; To clerkes lete I al disputisoun." And Chaucer finds difficulty in a compatibility between free will and predestination. Troilus does not accept divine providence as authoritatives: "Sin god seeth every thing, out of doutaunce, And hem desponeth, thourgh his ordenaunce, In hir merytes sothly for to be, As they shul comen by predestinee." Apart from the theological subject we can

hardly expect from him any explicit mention of the national and military affairs and the commercial and social problems which were thought to have a affiliation with the political administration of his day. He keeps silence about these matters. Even if we can find the mention of them, his reference to them is suggestive or insinuating. A description of the campaigns against France is not given; only a bare mention of the English tactics of archery which proved of advantage to the French cavalry charges, but was not successful in the seventies and the eighties is made in *Sir Thopas*: "he was a good archeer." Chaucer substitutes the description of the English knight's employment of a bow and arrow with that of the Flemish knight's employment of it. We again find nowhere any direct statement about a big change of prelates which, owing to anticlericalism took place in the Parliament of 1371. On the other hand, the *Brut* says of the lay lords' complaint of the episcopal administration sprang from their demand for direct taxation of the clergy: "And in this parlement, at the requeste & axying of the lordes, in hatred of men of holy chirche, the Chaunceler & tho that were Bisshopes, the Tresorer & the Clerk of the Pryue Sele, were remeued & put out of hire office, & in hire stedes were seculer men put yn." Nor do we find anywhere an explicit reference to Wyclif's attack on the Church except an implicit one in the Pardoner's description of a cook's change of accidents without affecting the substance. Chaucer alludes humorously to the Peasants' Revolt, presumably more than ten years after the riot. His allusion to the riot is the hideous noise suggestive of a shout set up by Jack Straw and his raged mob: "Certes, he lakke Straw, and his meynnee, Ne made never shoutes half so shrille, Whan that they wolden any Fleming kille, As thilke day was maad upon the fox." These lines were written after time had worn his actual feeling towards the riot. There is no knowing what he felt towards it. It may be said in this connection that his friend, "moral" Gower concluded that the rising had the result of bidding people out of being the wrong way, or misconducting themselves with God. No mention of the wool trade can not be found anywhere. Wool was one of the most important exports of England to Flanders. So, wool growers, lay and ecclesiastical alike, and wool merchants urged the argument in favour of the continuity of the unsuccessful war with France (from 1369 onwards) that the English might acquire the recaptured Flanders wool market. Both the Lords and the Commons did not refuse to supply money for the war. Chaucer never alludes, even in less conspicuous ways, to export wool. As mentioned above, however, he insidiously suggests that his Merchant is anxious for the safety of the trade channels between Middleburg and Orwell, and that his Wife of Bath excels weavers of Ypres and Ghent in weaving skill. He exaggerates the Wife's craftsmanship: "Of clooth-making she hadde swiche an haunt, She passed hem of Ypres and of Gaunt." It seems likely that attention is paid to his avoidance of, or his meagre reference to the important matters with government affiliations. He was a court poet as well as a royal servant. He never makes a slight reference to the realities of politics, disadvantageous or displeasing to those who were engaged in national government, whereas his friend Gower and Langland depict their feelings and freely communicate their views. This is considered as an inevitable consequence of his temperament and his services as a royal servant. He seems to have found favour with King Richard, Queen Anne and the Lancastrian family. It is supposed, in general, that he was indebted to these patrons for his appointments to government offices, to John of Gaunt for his appointments to the office of London customs

on wools in 1374 and to the diplomatic missions to Genoa in 1372 and to Milan in 1378, and to Richard and Anne for his appointments to the office of London customs on wines in 1382 and to the clerkship of the King's Works in 1389. Thus he must have given proper consideration to the traditional ideals and the medieval conventions of society. He may, according to established ideals, have treated those pilgrims who represented the medieval ideals of basic orders of society as everything they should be, and other pilgrims with sarcasm or amusement. This would seem to be a logical conclusion in so far as he took the medieval ideal's view of life. It would, however, be too hasty a conclusion that he always favoured the traditional view. He always sits on the fence. It may be interpreted, in one view, that it is those he satirizes, not those he idealizes, who are satirized.

IV

Much sympathy for human nature is the modern characteristic of man. Chaucer is laughing at the foibles of flesh and blood pilgrims and at the same time never hits off them. Nor does he admit their human foibles except that Chaucer the pilgrim agrees with the Monk who advanced an opinion as to secularism. He must have had an understanding of the Monk who ought to have escaped from annoyances of the world to the cloistral life, and yet would not close his worldly account and degraded himself to an easygoing worldling. The Monk delights in horse riding. Chaucer is quite aware of much difficulty in acting on the idealized teachings of St. Austin. The Prioress also evades as always her cloistral duties. Imitating courtly manners, she gives herself graces. She takes pains to bear herself in a ladylike fashion, to be refined in speech, and to be held worthy of reverence. Her pleasure is all in courtesy and graces. Chaucer's satire is concealed in his description of her use of Stratford-le-Bow French and her gentle manner of speaking, but he innocently assigns for it the reason that she knows nothing of Parisian French. He disguises satire. He treats her with disguised contempt. He rather feels compassion for her shallow feminine mind, and smiles with indulgent contempt. The fictitious Chaucer must amusedly have tolerated the boastful talk of the proud Wife who behaved herself like a lady of rank, when the other wives made their offerings. He admits on suffrance the self-importance to be common to the uneducated or the half educated. He never says that wives of the five Burgesses are intolerable, when he heard their husbands talk about them, who acted queenly under the shelter of their husbands' influence. The self-important Merchant, who is not considered, though clad in splendid attire, to have been educated, puts on superior airs in selling and buying, but the fact is that he makes a profit by the exchange of his crowns and yet is saddled with a debt. Chaucer says he never knows who his Merchant is. Many merchant princes of this sort were associated with magnates, many of whom contracted debts. King Edward III made a lot of debts in order to supply for his wars and many merchants were brought to ruin. To be sure, Chaucer seems to pretend not to know his Merchant's name. Paying his respects to the Merchant, however, Chaucer has a good word for him. Again, Chaucer never blames the well educated for their learned arrogance, avarice and selfishness. The wise Sergeant of the Law turns his learning to evil account and is insensible of qualms of conscience. He often served as judge at

assizes by the privilege of inspection conferred by the King and by a commission from the King to judge all sorts of cases. Taking advantage of common people's ignorance of the law, he is busy in transferring without any compunction the names of others' estates. He thinks, it seems, of it as a privilege given to the King's legal servant. Chaucer refrains from making ironical remarks. On the other hand, his description of the Doctor of Physic smacks of cynicism. Chaucer says for a joke that his Doctor loves gold above all things for the reason that gold is nothing but a cordial. The Doctor may have declared with arrogant indifference that "gold in phisik is a cordial." He made easy money when the pestilence was prevalent. As he put his patients upon the medical treatment grounded on astrology, he could not cure patients of the pestilence. Nevertheless, he is conceited. He must have made a parade of his learning of eminent authorities on medicine, both old and new, and have drawn ridicule upon himself. Chaucer is making fun of his Doctor by suggesting that "His studie was but litel on the Bible." The physicians of the Middle Ages were regarded as impious, for they were grounded in Moslem medical teaching. So, Chaucer's satiric remark on the Doctor's inattentive study of the Bible and his compliment, "In al this world ne was ther noon him lyk To speke of phisik," are interchangeable. The Friar and the Pardoner are godless men. Each abuses his authority to save a soul, only seeking his own interests. Each is impudent enough to say that a gift is ample proof that those who give it to him are pious or their sins were expiated. The Friar is agreeable and sociable. He is courteous and is ready to give absolution to rich folk, when he looks to receive a gift of money and an allowance of food. The Pardoner imposes false relics, such as false gems and pigs' bones in a glass, upon pious men and women. He, again, is highly elated over his preaching of a sin of avarice, by which he obtained money out of the pious folk who gave it to him lest they should sin against God.

Chaucer's description of those flesh and blood pilgrims contrasts strikingly with that of the idealized pilgrims. Chaucer portrays the flesh and blood characters as he saw and heard them. He depicts them in what they really are. In the idealized characters he portrays everything that they should be. They form the most perfect representation of what men of the Middle Ages should be. The chivalrous ideal is represented by the Knight, the Church's one by the Parson and the peasant, the Plowman. It was hoped that the Middle Ages uplifted the Christian ideal of the suppression of men's passions, which those idealized characters represented. Viewed from the strictly moral standpoint on medieval men of every class of society almost every pilgrim except a few idealized characters is human, so human as to err. Yet each is likely, so Chaucer tells us, to have nothing to worry about, to take a cheerful view of life. So each does not feel small. Rather, each, he or she, takes man, so his creator portrays, as sinful. Some even value themselves, as they say, on their own ways of living, which can be found in the words of the Franklin who is of opinion that he takes sensuous pleasure for solid, perfect felicity. If such a portrait had not been a proper object for Chaucer's attention, he, like Gower, might have been as well to say much in blame of sinful pilgrims by the medieval standard of morality. He refrains from criticizing them. However, this claims a consideration of his readers who were composed, not only of knights and ladies of the royal families and court clerics, but of men of the gentry class, such as the Merchant, the Sergeant of the Law and the leaders of some prominent London guilds. Even so, such churls as the Miller and the Reeve, the Summoner

and the Manciple, were hardly, no doubt, to be counted among Chaucer's readers. These common folk are seldom noticed in the literature of the day; they, even if noticed, are presented to us, in most cases, as being treated merely with scorn. Nevertheless or therefore, Chaucer introduces to his readers those vulgar characters and their coarse, indecent tales, making an apology for his rudeness. It seems possible, in this regard, that he loves each individual pilgrim of the sort who is human. Indeed, Chaucer the pilgrim listens to his opinion, to his boastful talk, and to a complaint he or she made to him. Chaucer is in sympathy with him or her, agrees with some individual but never opposes to anybody, not to speak of an idealized character. He, instead, grins at those sinful individuals who are past redemption and often makes ironical remarks to them. He never represses individuality. On the contrary, he often praises them for their skill, their ability or their character. Their personal costumes and attires also can not escape his notice. He describes in detail all the appearances and attires of sinful pilgrims, and of idealized pilgrims alike. To be sure, he individualizes those idealized characters, but something human is lacking in their portraits. He applies himself closely to embody those medieval ideals of what they should be in their portraits, so they are not so much human beings as ideal conceptions. As has been suggested, in actuality, those established ideals they represent were far from their realization because of their lofty ideals difficult to carry out of men's passions suppressing. The Church that must have fostered was contradictory of her own ideals. The rise of men of middle classes gave impetus to the self-contradiction of the medieval ideals. These middle-class men who were always preoccupied with calculation seem, like Chaucer's Franklin, to have reckoned everything in money. Nothing feels to be more familiar to a man than his own personal interests. The fourteenth-century men of middle classes were gradually assuming greater prominence. They had gotten their positions, as it were, for money. Some wealthier men, whether country landholder or burgess, raised their positions among the gentry class. Even the peasantry could get a chance in life. Most conspicuous among these newly rising men were William of Wykeham, bishop of Winchester, and Sir Robert Knolles, a prominent captain. These are said to have risen from the lowest rank of a serf. It is a truism that fourteenth-century peasant conditions were being improved by the unexpected consequences of the pestilence. But the King's war with France enabled common folk to advance in their positions. The indenture system and the Commissions of Array served the King's need of gaining recruits for strength of his army. Financial support was given to the King by the Commons who were the parliamentary gentlemen and citizens, and by wealthy merchants. Thus the newly knighted men, the yeomen archers obtained great distinction and the merchant princes came into the world. Not suiting the changing necessities of the times, Langland is critical of the rise of men of humbler ranks. The strict, medieval distinction of every class of society was gradually being levelled. Many men of every class passed in a variety of ways the bounds of class. Not a few of the eneouffed knights unwilling to perform knight service retired from the service to the management of their manors. They were little better than wealthier freeholders. And every social class consisted of heterogeneous men of social classes. Wyclif, unlike Langland, treated a matter of belief from a new angle of the individual, taking in the abuses of the Church which could hardly be reformed on the orthodox lines. He never submitted to the doctrine that the corrupt servants of the Church

who were not worthy of their administration of the Sacrament made Christ's body. He advocated the new doctrine of the direct relation of the individual to God's teaching. This advocacy of his led to a denial of the Church's whole system on which her authority depended. There is no means of knowing of what Chaucer thought about Wyclif's doctrine. It is evident, however, that Chaucer, too, respected individuality. He individualizes each pilgrim. Like Wyclif he does not think, from a point of view of the individual, of Christian belief as it ought to be, but has a deep view of each individual interests as distinguished from divine ones. He must warmly have approved of all the human beings including the ecclesiastics being past redemption. He is aware that even lofty ideals are more or less distorted by men easy to err. He must hardly have refrained from doubting to what degree the established belief consoled him in this variable world. He thinks of the orthodox belief as being beyond the range of human knowledge. He adopts this agnostic ideas in the *Knight's Tale*. Chaucer's Palamon grumbles at Providence: "What governaunce is in this prescience, That giltelees tormenteth innocence? And yet encreseth this al my penaunce, That man is bounden to his observaunce, For Goddes sake, to letten of his wille, Ther as a beest may al his lust fulfille!" Chaucer himself was sure to fully realize that man was at the mercy of Fortune. Experience must have led Chaucer to think that only a particular individual was trustworthy. In actual world so variable, the court poet seems to have crouched under adversity during the years following 1385 when he employed himself in writing the *Canterbury Tales*. The King's Court was thrown into an uproar. The royal families and their supporters scrambled for power. Chaucer was trifled with the political entanglements. He was under an eclipse as the power of Gaunt, his patron, was in eclipse when Richard came to the throne in 1382. In this same year, perhaps, the King formed his faction, intending to consolidate his position. He opposed to the continuation of the unsuccessful war with France, while his uncle Gaunt had a zeal for the conquest of Castile, French ally. After having a quarrel with the King, he set sail for Castile. Soon after, however, the King was confronted by another rival, Thomas, Duke of Gloucester, brother of Gaunt, who obtained renown by the capture of the Flemish fleet in the Channel in 1385. Gloucester's faction joined by Henry, son of Gaunt, prevailed against the King's faction. Chaucer's appointment of Justice of the Peace for Kent in 1385 and his resignation from both Comptrollerships of the Customs on wools and on wines in 1386 are considered to have been caused by Gloucester's enmity. It is not known that Chaucer was associated with this uncle of Richard. So, Chaucer may have been regarded, though not a member of the King's faction, as Richard's favourite. In the Parliament of 1388, in fact, the Gloucester and his faction purged leading supporters of the King. In 1389 when Richard became of age and could exercise the royal prerogative, Chaucer temporarily held the office of Clerk of the King's Works, but resigned from his Clerkship in 1391. From the same year till 1399, perhaps, he held the office of Sub-Forester of North Petherton in Somerset. Detached from the political circles of London, he lived in Somerset, surrounded by Kent folk who enjoyed a simple country life. Meanwhile the King was troubled about the Lollard movement. Many Lollard Knights were counted among the households of royal families. In 1395 the King suppressed them in favour of bishops. In *Truth* Chaucer, with reference to the Lollard movement, recommended to Sir Philip de la Vache, the son-in-law of Sir Lewis Clifford, a Lollard Knight, the

self-control or self-sufficiency which Chaucer had learned from Boethius, whose *Consolation of Philosophy* he had rendered into English. These medieval virtues lead men to "trouthe," good faith. But the fact is that Chaucer deliberately reverses the "trouthe." The word "trouthe" here is connotative of fidelity to his own self. His trust in individuality is proved by his creation of the Wife of Bath. She takes her own experience for her authority, saying that she has had enough experience to lead her to think that she trusts in her own self.

(昭和46年9月29日受理)